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S E C R E T MONTEVIDEO 000422

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2028

TAGS: PREL CASC AR UY
SUBJECT: PRESS ALLEGES "CIA" TIES WITH URUGUAYAN-AMERICAN
DETAINED IN ARGENTINA; BARDESIO PURPORTEDLY INVOLVED IN
DICTATORSHIP-ERA DEATH SQUADS

Classified By: Charge Robin Matthewman: Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) On July 24, the leftist weekly Brecha published an investigative article asserting that former Uruguayan police photographer, Nelson Bardesio Marzoa, was now living in Argentina and had entered the country in June 2006 with a U.S. passport. The article asserts that Bardesio was abducted in March 1972 by the Tupamaros. During his interrogation, he purportedly confessed to details about paramilitary groups who acted as death squads reporting to the Ministries of Interior and Defense. He was released to the Ministry of Defense in May 1972. The article asserts he probably left Uruguay in November 1972, possibly assisted by CIA agents stationed in Montevideo. He might have gone to Canada or Mexico. In 1976, he reportedly married in Texas (Bexar county). Finally, the article claims that Uruguayan Authorities requested information on Bardesio through Interpol, and requested that the Argentine authorities detain him, as a first step toward possible extradition.

¶2. (S) The Brecha article has been picked up by various Uruguayan web portals, including Montevideo Portal and El País Digital. Local evening news covered the story extensively on July 24 after Bardesio was detained in Argentina. Montevideo and Buenos Aires are in close contact. We have confirmed that Bardesio is a naturalized U.S. citizen. Montevideo RAO also confirmed with contacts in Washington that Bardesio did have some type of relationship with RAO between 1967 and 1971. We have requested more information on the details of the connection, and any assistance that the USG may have provided for resettlement outside of Uruguay.

¶3. (S) Late in the day on July 24, Embassy Buenos Aires learned that law enforcement officers identifying themselves as INTERPOL took into custody dual U.S.-Uruguayan citizen Nelson Bardesio Marzoa, DPOB 07JUL1940 Montevideo. ACS Buenos Aires plans to visit Bardesio on July 25. He came to the attention of ACS Buenos Aires a day prior on July 23, when he called the consular section to advise that Uruguayan reporters were outside his door. Conoff provided him the lawyer list and advised him to contact them if he had any further problems.

¶4. (S) In talking to Buenos Aires conoff, Bardesio confirmed some of the details that were in the Brecha article the next day. He said he had collaborated with US Embassy Montevideo about 30 years ago, passing messages from the Uruguayan government to officials at the Embassy (CIA). He was working for the Uruguayan police at the time. Bardesio also mentioned his kidnapping by "Tupamaros" for 90 days. Once released by the group, he claimed the USG aided him in entering the US where he remained for the next 24 years and obtained citizenship. He explained he had moved to Argentina about 4 1/2 years ago where he had had no trouble up until now. His attorney, Aldo Spicacci (one of the lawyers on Embassy BsAs'

lawyer list), confirmed that Bardesio was taken into Argentine police custody on July 24.

¶5. (S) COMMENT: Embassy Buenos Aires will attempt to visit Bardesio July 25. Embassies Montevideo and Buenos Aires have collaborated on draft press guidance, which we will get cleared on July 25. We will work closely with Washington agencies to obtain the remaining facts of the case, and discuss appropriate outreach to the Uruguayan authorities. There is a strong likelihood this case will be politically explosive in Uruguay. The story will confirm some Uruguayans, suspicions that the USG was involved actively in the military dictatorship's repressive tactics.

Matthewman